REMNANTS OF FOLKLORE IN EASTERN YORK COUNTY

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It is relatively safe to say that a folk saying or a folk tune has as many different variations, however slight, as there are people reciting or singing it. For the folklorist this is a very fortunate situation, since it means that the business of collecting is ceaseless. It is the purpose of this article to bring to the reader's attention some variations on familiar Pennsylvania German folk sayings which were recorded by me while gathering material for my doctoral dissertation entitled, **The German Dialect of Eastern York County, Pennsylvania** (unpublished, U. of Illinois, 1941: 478 pp.)

Many years have passed by since Herder, the first noteworthy collector of folksongs in Germany, estimated that in all of Germany there were but a scant fifty or so genuine folksongs existing. Not long after his time several collections began to appear which contained several thousand of these folksongs. Somewhat later, in the early nineteenth century, and not too far removed from our own times, we accepted the great doctrine of the German Romanticists who believed that 'the folk composes folksongs spontaneously and simultaneously at different spots over the countryside' ('das Volk dichtet'). Today we no longer share such a view, but believe that one person, remembered or forgotten, is the original author of a folksong and that the folk 'sings it to pieces' ('zersingen')—that is, changes it in text and tune from mouth to mouth until it may have a hundred or so slightly different variations. Nowhere can we find better examples of this process than in dialects, and more especially in our own Pennsylvania German dialect. John B. Stoudt's **The Folklore of the Pennsylvania Germans** (Phila., Campbell, 1916), clearly shows the process of 'singing-to-pieces' through the many variations of a number of common folksongs cited in the work. Since the appearance of Stoudt's study, the **Eck** has featured from time to time various different versions of Pennsylvania German children's verses and rimes, some from scattered sections of our own state of Pennsylvania and others from Pennsylvania German settlements in Indiana and elsewhere.

Let the reader compare these eastern York county versions with those he may have known in his community:

1. Counting-out rimes:

(a) **Eens, zwee, drei,**
Hicke, hocke, hei;
Waer muss naus,
Ich adder du?
Adder 's Miller's
Kich kaa adder
Schwarzi Kelwerskuh?

Note: Stoudt, op.cit., p. 49, gives the following version which seems nearest to the above:

Eens, zwee, drei,
Hicka, hocka, hei!
Maud hol Wei,
Knecht, schenk ei,
Herr, sauf aus,
Wer mus naus?
Ich oder du
Oders Beckers alte kueh
kau Kuh,
Un sell bist du.

(b) **"One"-ri, "two"-ri, Hickeri-end,**
Fieles, falles, Nicklas Tschon;
Piewi, paawi, "Virgin Mary"
Sinklem, saenklem bock!

Note: Stoudt, op.cit., p. 46, gives:
Ekkeri, akai-ri you kair-are,
Fillisin, fallacy, Nicklas-jan,
Kivi, kavi, Irishman,
Stini, stani, buck.

Also, p.47:
Onery, twoery ichery Ann,
Fillacy, fallacy, Nicholas John,
Queby, quaby, Irish Mary,
Stinkelum, stankelum, buck.

2. A rime said while pointing to the twelve signs of the zodiac (as pictured in John Baer's **Agricultural Almanac**, Lancaster, Pa., which is found in many a Pennsylvania home):

(a) This version is considered the 'more correct' one by local informants—it goes clockwise:

Die Buwe sin bees,
(boys—Gemini)
Der Widder gebt Schteess.
(wether—Aries)
Der Schtier rennt,
(steer—Taurus)
Der Skorpion glemmt.
(scorpion—Scorpio)
Die Yungfraa schprecht,
(virgin—Virgo)
Der Grebs, der schtecht.
(crab—Cancer)
Der Schteebock schpringt,
(Capricorn)
Der Fisch, der schwimmt.
(fish—Pisces)
Der Wassermann giesst,
(waterman—Aquarius)
Der Schitz, der schiesst.
(hunter—Sagittarius)
Die Woog, die gilt
(scales—Libra)
Der Leeb, der brillt.
(lion—Leo)

(b) The following version, not considered so 'correct' as (a), goes counterclockwise:

Zwee Maed sin bees,
(girls—Gemini)
Der Leeb, der brillt.
(lion—Leo)
Die Woog, die gilt,
(scales—Libra)
Der Schitz, der schiesst,
(hunter—Sagittarius)
Der Wassermann giesst,
(waterman—Aquarius)
Der Fisch, der schwimmt,
(fish—Pisces)
Der Schteebock rennt,
(Capricorn)
Der Schtertschem schticht,
(sturgeon—Scorpio)
Die Yungfraa schpricht,
(virgin—Virgo)
Der Grebs, der geht,
(crab—Cancer)
Der Widder, der leit,
(wether—Aries)
Der Schtier, der schteht.
(steer—Taurus)

Note: According to the picture, the last two are recited in reverse order.